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ABSTRACT

This newsletter issue focuses on the directions school/college partnerships need to take if they are to contribute to a genuine reform of American education. It begins by explaining what each sector gains, then briefly describes current models, and highlights programs that can serve as guideposts. It concludes with a discussion of how policymakers can encourage schools and colleges to work effectively together toward system-wide improvement. Programs that are highlighted involve both services to students as well as to educators and include such areas as dropout prevention, programs for gifted and talented students, advanced seminars for educators in different academic disciplines, curriculum and instruction programs, and leadership academies for principals and administrators. Also, illustrations are provided of how the lessons learned from past partnerships can help school officials and teachers get involved with the basic operation of schools, and translate the mechanisms and strategies for improving student performance, curriculum, instruction, and leadership into standard practice in the schools. Contains seven references. (GLR)

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Future Directions for School/College Collaboration

Patricia R. Brown and Mary Amsler

Despite their mutual dependence, America's K-12 schools and its colleges have been remarkably isolated from each other. Schools prepare students for college; colleges, in turn, train future school professionals. Clearly, each system's policies and programs significantly affect the other. But rarely have institutional representatives come together to discuss mutual problems and needs.

This dynamic is changing, however. Especially in the last decade, a momentum has developed to weave a stronger web between these systems. Thousands of school/college partnerships have emerged throughout the country, and—less formally—many colleges are becoming involved in some way with elementary or secondary education, sometimes supporting dozens of programs. The exact number of such partnerships in the Far West Region is difficult to know, but researchers calculate that the number is easily in the hundreds.

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development serves the four-state region of Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah, working with educators at all levels to plan and carry out school improvements. Part of our mission is to help state department staff, district superintendents, school principals, and classroom teachers keep abreast of the best current thinking and practice.

In part, this trend has occurred because schools are being asked to do more and do it better. To meet the national goals and standards, American schools must change radically. Colleges, too, are under fire. In Nebraska, for example, postsecondary education goals similar to the K-12 national goals ask colleges to upgrade the academic preparation of entering freshmen, increase graduation rates, require that students demonstrate college-level competence in challenging subjects, and work toward complete adult literacy. Other states are considering similar action.

Such goals for colleges are inextricably tied to elementary and secondary school performance. Conversely, colleges and universities have a strong role to play in transforming K-12 education. School/college partnerships, used to full advantage, can become the bridge that allows these two sectors to translate each other's information, share resources, and move forward on needed reform.

However, most school/college partnerships remain outside the core of schools. They target a few students for special programs, work with teachers from a wide variety of school settings, or assist in the development of special programs. Despite extraordinary successes with individual students and educators, *systems* remain unchanged. When the partnership is gone, the program is gone. If partnerships are to fulfill their promise, they need to get inside schools and apply lessons learned from model partnerships and reform programs to the entirety of school practice.

Similarly, colleges and universities remain largely unchanged. Lessons learned from working with K-12 educators are not carried forward into post-secondary education.

This *Brief* will address the directions school/college partnerships need to take if they are to contribute to a genuine reform of American education. It begins by explaining what each sector gains, then briefly describes current models and highlights programs that can serve as guideposts. It concludes with a discussion of how policymakers can encourage schools and colleges to work effectively together toward system-wide improvement.

What Can Colleges and Schools Offer Each Other?

Historically, people from higher education have not worked well with K-12 educators in the design and implementation of reform efforts. As a result, their input may not be welcome now. Most teachers can tell at least one story of being talked down to by an arrogant college professor who exhibited little understanding of the complex responsibilities and daily realities of life in today's classroom.

Yet colleges and universities do have a wealth of resources that schools may draw on. For example, faculty expertise in subject matter areas, program development, and the design of curriculum and teaching materials could be helpful to schools redesigning their curricula to create real choices for students. Colleges also can offer a model of professional development and intellectual independence that teachers and administrators might want to incorporate into their restructured schools.

Moreover, as outside observers, college faculty and staff can provide schools with an independent view of what works and what doesn't or even be the catalysts for change. Not mired in the particular school's bureaucracy, a college can help school teams break through sticking points in their deliberations.

What do colleges gain by getting involved and committing resources to schools? Better-prepared students, for starters. Until recently the number and quality of applicants have allowed colleges to be fairly selective. Now, however, they must dip deeper into the applicant pool to keep enrollments up. Without real reforms that increase high school students' achievement, colleges will face declining enrollments, increased remediation, or a drop in standards.

Colleges also have a clear stake in helping ensure that reforms are systemic. A growing number of critics of past reform efforts argue that the K-12 educational system will not improve until diverse policies aimed at piecemeal improvements are replaced by a more coherent system, reinforced and supported by the higher education and business communities. Teacher preparation, curriculum, classroom instruction, graduation standards and competencies are all pieces of the educational system of which colleges and universities are a part.

To meet the long-term vision of international competitiveness that inspired the national goals, colleges as well as schools will have to improve. In the present system, getting students to college is only part of the answer; once there, almost half dropout. Forty-five percent of white students and 70 percent of black students who enroll in four-year colleges dropout at some point. Too much talent is falling by the wayside as only those who fit the mold succeed in graduating. Colleges can learn a great deal from the elementary and secondary reform process that inform their own efforts to increase student retention and achievement.

Many colleges are beginning to recognize the wisdom of acting now to influence the school change process rather than *re*acting later. In a number of successful partnerships, schools and colleges have been able to put aside historical resentments and work together, sharing ideas, talents, and resources across institutional boundaries.

Prominent Partnership Models

School/college partnerships began in the 1950s when John Goodlad created the Network for Education Renewal at UCLA wherein school and college educators could work together toward educational improvement. (Goodlad and colleagues continue this work today at the University of Washington's Center for Educational Renewal.) With the 1960s came Upward Bound, a government-sponsored program that still provides academic and social support to students who might not otherwise go to college.

In the last decade partnerships have flourished. Today's programs fall into the two categories pioneered by the models mentioned above: services to students and services to educators. Programs presented here illustrate a cross-section of activities that link elementary and secondary schools with colleges.

Services to Students

Many colleges provide services directly to elementary and secondary school students. Student-based partnerships have a range of goals, including college recruitment, increasing the number of students prepared for college, preparing students for specific disciplines (especially math and science), and encouraging students to pursue special talents. Because of the focus on college preparation, partnerships are skewed toward the high school level.

The college's level of involvement with the school varies considerably. The connection may simply mean a letter of cooperation, a visit from a recruiter, contact with a counselor in the school, assistance in recruiting appropriate students, or coordinating program activities with the school schedule. But some partnerships require a teacher in the school to participate in the program or have college faculty interacting with school teachers and administrators. A few are trying to transform the school's operation to provide more challenging opportunities for all students.

School/college partnerships focused on students often target specific students to receive special services. Typical of such efforts are **bridge programs** similar to those used in Upward Bound. Bridge programs work with high schools to identify students with academic talents or college potential and provide them with counseling, school-based academic support (special "bridge" classes, after school or Saturday programs, tutoring and mentoring), and special activities, usually on the college campus, to expose them to experiences and possibilities they may

not otherwise know about. Some programs, like that of the University of Missouri at St. Louis, work with neighboring schools and can offer year-round opportunities; others, such as Connecticut College's High School Advancement Program and Xavier University's subject-matter focused programs, attract students from a wide region for residential summer courses.

Dropout prevention programs use similar strategies to help students at a younger age or with weaker academic backgrounds. The primary goal is to keep kids in school, but academic success is a key motivator. Kean College in New Jersey operates an extensive program wherein Central American students in grades six through 10 provide tutoring and mentoring support for their younger peers. Students are brought to campus, sometimes with their parents, for weekend and summer activities. Hispanic employees of AT&T volunteer to work with individual students and families as they adjust to this country. California State University, Sacramento, works in partnership with two local school districts and community service agencies to help at-risk students in West Sacramento by providing tutoring, counseling, and staff training to the schools.

Many colleges cooperate with local high schools to allow high school students to take **college courses while still in high school**. Colleges can provide advanced courses such as calculus which the high school might not be able to offer. Or students may take courses at the college for credit. Community colleges especially have created such links with local high schools. In Utah, for example, strong community college and high school partnerships have developed since a legislative initiative passed allowing students to graduate early from high school and enroll in college during their senior year.

This type of cooperation can be expanded into a whole-school concept. For example, LaGuardia Community College in Queens, New York, pioneered an alternative "middle college" high school on campus. The middle college philosophy brings students at risk of dropping out to the community college campus to complete high school. In an atmosphere of greater freedom, increased responsibility, and tremendous academic and social support students flourish. Middle college students are allowed to take appropriate college courses for credit or advanced placement.

Many universities also have special programs for **gifted and talented students**. These enriched summer and weekend programs offer college-level courses and exposure to the vast resources of a college campus to students still in high school. The Johns Hopkins Center for the Advancement of Academically Talented Youth works in collaboration with several other colleges to offer summer programs to students identified through several regional talent searches. Seventh grade students must score at or above the 97th percentile on the SAT to qualify.

Services to Educators

A number of school/college partnerships work with educators — teachers, counselors, principals, and superintendents — instead of students. These, too, involve a variety of models and working arrangements. Most such programs are one-time weekend or summer institutes where individual teachers or administrators can explore subject-matter or instructional issues. Some, however, promote ongoing interaction between school and college staffs throughout the year. Increasingly common are programs in which faculty from the college work with individual schools on a regular basis.

Summer institutes focusing on different academic disciplines are offered at many colleges and universities. In these programs college faculty offer advanced seminars to elementary or secondary school staff. Innovative programs may integrate several disciplines in a theme-oriented curriculum. The National Endowment for the Humanities provides grants to colleges for this type of summer institute, with intellectual renewal and stimulation as the primary goals.

Leadership academies for principals and administrators are primarily sponsored by Schools of Education. Stanford sponsors a network of area superintendents that meets regularly to discuss common problems and educational issues and to talk with leading experts in a variety of disciplines. A number of universities, including the University of Nevada, operate LEAD (Leadership in Educational Administration) programs for principals that provide training and staff development activities in leadership and school effectiveness.

An **Academic Alliance** is a less structured forum for faculty interaction. An Alliance brings together faculty from area schools and colleges to discuss books, issues, or curriculum. In some of these Alliances faculty from different institutions have developed strong working relationships, developed curriculum and lesson plans, and even begun other partnerships. Alliance participants at all levels report greater understanding of the challenges they face and find the interaction stimulating and rewarding.

A subset of programs focuses on **curriculum and instruction**. While

these also require interaction between college and school faculty, the purpose is to produce new curriculum or disseminate new instructional strategies. PATHS/PRISM, an extraordinary collaboration between the Philadelphia School District and most of the colleges in the area, sponsors over 25 programs to enhance curriculum and instruction in the schools.

A number of universities operate **teacher centers**. These offer continuing education for teachers in a variety of formats and provide curriculum materials and other instructional resources. The Chicago Teachers' Center at Northeastern Illinois University provides opportunities for teachers, administrators, and university faculty to work cooperatively to share information, support, and practical answers to day-to-day questions.

Ways for schools and colleges to interact are limitless. The University of California at Riverside has developed a research cooperative (CERC: Center for Educational Research Cooperative) with neighboring county offices of education and school districts to conduct research that will meet the specific needs of local schools. Southwest Texas State in San Marcos began a community-wide partnership to provide a broad range of social services to school children and parents in the city in an effort to reduce the dropout rate and improve academic performance.

Weaving a Stronger Web to Encourage Systemic Change

Partnerships such as those described here are remarkably effective at meeting their primary goals. The success rates for school graduation, college acceptance, and college completion are over 95 percent for many student-focused programs. Participating teachers and principals report high rates of enthusiasm and satisfaction with institutes and resource centers.

The problem is that these are isolated efforts. Usually such programs leave the school unchanged. Selected students fare better, but others remain untouched, because program strategies that increase student motivation and skills are not transferred to the school as a whole. Teachers return from institutes to school cultures that resist innovation and to colleagues who don't share their enthusiasm. What they've learned over the summer is quickly left behind. Principals, too, discover that newly developed curricula are difficult to implement and that the summer's high-level discussions are remote from their day-to-day challenges. So program ideas languish on shelves.

If we look at any comprehensive listing of "school/college partnerships," we find that the majority do not actually work with schools. In most cases students or educators from a large number of schools and districts volunteer for their programs which are held on the college campus without any direct links to the schools. While these programs provide enrichment and improvement for these individuals, they do little to change the way schools work or to improve the performance of the educational system. In fact, a great many "partnerships" cannot list specific schools or districts as collaborators.

For school/college partnerships to be more effective, they must translate their successes with individual students and teachers into systemwide improvement. Selecting a few students for special treatment or sending some teachers, refreshed and renewed, back to a stultifying atmosphere will not raise the standards of American education. To do this, programs and strategies that make higher achievement possible must become part of the everyday school environment. And the lessons learned in improving student performance at the elementary and secondary school levels need to be brought to colleges.

Lessons Learned for the Improvement of the Educational System

Fortunately, as partnerships have matured, some have begun to reach deeper into the school culture so that their effects go beyond the targeted students, the participating teacher, or the isolated subject area. From such programs we can learn how to transform school/college partnerships into true vehicles for improving educational performance systemwide.

What the following model programs have in common is that they expand opportunities for all students to meet higher standards. They have successfully changed the educational patterns within the school by changing what is taught, how it is taught, and to whom it is taught. Participating schools and colleges have blurred their boundaries, developed stronger cooperative relationships, and devised ways to realign their resources on behalf of students.

The general lesson is simple: get involved with the basic operation of schools, and translate the mechanisms and strategies for improving student performance, curriculum, instruction, and leadership into standard practice in the schools. The following list illustrates how partnerships working at different levels can accomplish this transformation.

- **Move partnership activities to the school site and integrate them into the regular school program**. Programs that target individual students can work directly to transform opportuni-

ties within the school. The Bridge Program at Wabash College near Indianapolis has worked with George Washington High School to develop a demanding college preparatory program within the school. Wabash faculty members work with the high school's counselors to encourage students with poor academic backgrounds to take demanding courses. Wabash then provides mentoring and tutoring support so these students can succeed.

- **Help educators translate their partnership experiences into classroom practice**. The Bay Area Writing Project at the University of California at Berkeley expanded its summer institute model of working with individual teachers to include follow-up implementation activities in the classroom and a more school-team oriented approach. Successfully replicated in math in the early 1980s, this model has now evolved into a statewide network of Subject Matter Projects that operate out of numerous universities and work with teachers to translate the state curriculum frameworks and the latest teaching techniques into classroom practice.

- **Transform the entire school's curriculum and instructional practices, not just those of a few teachers**. ACCESS, a partnership between Lawrence Hall of Science, the Oakland Public Schools, and the San Francisco Schools, works with middle and high schools to upgrade the math curriculum. The partners work with schools to design new curricula, train teachers in new methods and strategies, and help teachers implement the curricula in their classrooms. ACCESS recently expanded to include English as well as math.

- **View the entire school as the unit of change**. Brown University's Coalition of Essential Schools, directed by Theodore Sizer, works with schools to address the total educational environment, including expectations, curriculum, sequencing of courses, teacher and administrator training, class schedules, and extra-curricular activities. Coalition staff work directly with individual schools, provide extensive training for school staff, share knowledge of alternative models for success, and provide extensive networking among the schools. No aspect of schooling is sacrosanct in this search for new approaches that can help produce high achievement across the board.

- **Expand partnership efforts to include systemwide improvement**. The Santa Ana Unified School District has a unique partnership called Project STEP with three area colleges: the University of California at Irvine, California State University at Fullerton, and Rancho Santiago Community College. In not quite a decade these institutions have developed permanent working relationships that allow them to regularly review district needs and develop joint solutions. Together they have systematically addressed curriculum, counseling, instruction, and dropout prevention activities throughout the district. During this period the district's college-going rates have gone from an estimated 10 percent to over 65 percent.

- **Go beyond individual schools to community-wide objectives**. The Think Tank in Phoenix, Arizona, is a partnership involving the Phoenix Union High School District, its five feeder elementary districts, the Maricopa Community College District, the City of Phoenix, and Arizona State University. Representatives of each entity meet regularly for retreats to discuss institutional needs and priorities and how the group can work together to improve area schools. They have successfully negotiated articulation agreements between the elementary and high school districts, are developing a common database for tracking students as they move through the system, and run a number of specific projects to improve educational opportunities and student performance in specific schools.

- **Carry student success strategies forward into college**. The University of Minnesota has worked closely with the Upward Bound Program on campus to provide services to students in the general education program aimed at enhancing college success. Services include mentoring programs between lower- and upperclassmen and a Study Skills Center. Interim reports track student progress and guide follow-up.

What Can Policymakers Do?

At every level policymakers can encourage schools and colleges to take on the challenge of educational reform together. Where partnerships exist, policy decisions can provide incentives and models for broadening their goals. State agencies can offer planning grants for partnerships wanting to move toward systemic change, disseminate models of community and system collaboration, provide evaluation and planning assistance, and highlight successful collaborative endeavors.

Where partnerships are absent, state agencies can encourage schools and colleges to work together — first on specific issues of mutual concern, and later on systemwide reform. The State Board of Higher Education in Arizona (AMEAC) has begun a statewide program to encourage colleges and universities to work with local schools. The California State University System has linked many of its partnership efforts through a network called CAPP

(California Academic Partnership Program). CAPP provides resources for partnership development and opportunities for programs to learn from each other.

Institutional leaders can also promote collaboration. The President of the University of Louisville in Kentucky and the Dean of the School of Education meet regularly with superintendents from the surrounding counties to discuss ways they can work together to meet the goals of education reform in the state. These meetings have spawned numerous partnerships among the collaborating systems, including businesses in the area.

Policymakers can also encourage colleges and universities to examine their own outcomes and how current practices (or lack of them) contribute to these outcomes. As colleges take more responsibility for their own students' performance, they can learn much from K-12 school reform efforts.

Conclusion

School/college partnerships alone may not turn the American educational system around, but those focused on systemic reform may be able to unlock barriers to change. By offering each other an outside view of their respective programs, partners can help identify new paths to take. By learning to understand each other's environments, they can elimate obstacles to student success. Community, state, or private colleges are within reach of most school districts, and sufficient models of collaboration exist. Through expanded networks and larger consortia of schools and colleges, the lessons learned in individual partnerships can migrate throughout the system.

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